Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D.C. 20505

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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

15 July 1985

Afghanistan: The Summer Campaign

SUMMARY

The Afghan insurgents are maintaining a high level of activity, as in past summers. The Soviets have responded with large-scale sweep operations and increasing use of elite Spetsnaz units following springtime efforts to disrupt insurgent supply lines near the Pakistani border.

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The Panjsher Valley

Renewed insurgent attacks in and near the Panjsher Valley in recent weeks have prompted the Soviets to enlarge their operations in the area.

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-- The insurgents have been attacking Afghan garrisons in the valley for several weeks and last month overran the garrison at Peshghowr, taking several hundred prisoners and killing an Afghan general.

-- Attacks on convoys near the Salang Pass recently resumed in earnest.

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This paper was prepared by [   ] Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh Branch, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and may be directed to the Chief, South Asia Division, NESA, on [   ]

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NESA M   85-10149

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The Soviets are preparing to respond with massive air and artillery bombardments—and probably another large ground offensive—in an attempt to disrupt Panjsher insurgent commander Masood's operations and forestall fresh attacks on the Salang highway.

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-- A regiment of Soviet troops and supporting artillery have advanced nearly halfway up the valley, and another regiment is entering the valley.

-- The Soviets have moved 20 more fighter-bombers and 25 attack helicopters to Bagram airfield, which in the past has been a staging area for operations in the Panjsher Valley. The 55 fighter-bombers and 50 attack helicopters now at Bagram include at least 12 fighter-bombers recently sent from Chirchik in the USSR.

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Past offensives have shown that the Soviets are able to move up the valley despite guerrilla resistance. In these operations, however, the insurgents have generally managed to get away before Soviet forces could cut off their escape routes. If the Soviets are successful in engaging insurgent forces, both sides will probably suffer heavy casualties.

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Activity Elsewhere

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The Soviets appear to be preparing for another large-scale operation in the Herat area. US Embassy sources have reported continued deterioration of security in Qandahar as well.

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Despite increased Soviet concern for airfield security in recent weeks, insurgents struck two airbases. Some 24 Afghan fighter aircraft—about 10 percent of the force—were destroyed at Shindand, apparently through sabotage.

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The large-scale Soviet and Afghan operation in Konarha Province last month proved again the Soviets' ability to move large numbers of air and ground forces into insurgent-held areas. After freeing the besieged Afghan garrison at Barikowt, however, the Soviet forces withdrew, and insurgent harassment of the post has resumed. Although the Soviet operation may have disrupted insurgent supply lines through the province—at least temporarily—there has been no noticeable effect on insurgent activity throughout Afghanistan, which continues at the high level that has become normal for the summertime.

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